

Synthesizing the American Dream

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Rereading, Notetaking, Prewriting, Drafting, Self-Editing/Peer Editing, Sharing and Responding

Assignment

Your assignment is to synthesize at least three to five sources and your own observations to defend, challenge, or qualify the statement that America still provides access to the American Dream, to the “tired, the poor, and the huddled masses.” This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources (3–5) into a coherent, well-written argumentative essay. Be sure to refer to the sources and employ your own observations to support your position. Your argument should be central; the sources and your observations should support this argument.

Steps

Planning

1. As a class or in small groups, review the elements of a strong synthesis paper.
2. Revisit and carefully consider the various texts (sources) from the unit to identify three to five sources that might be relevant to your position.

Drafting

3. Draft your own position on the issue. Consider two or three possible positions you could take and then decide which of those positions you really want to take. Be careful not to generalize, but instead consider the nuances and complexities of the topic.
4. Imagine presenting your position on the issue to each of the authors of your sources. Create an imaginary conversation between you and the author of the source discussing the following questions, and record your findings.
 - ▶ Would the author/creator agree with your position? Disagree? Why?
 - ▶ Would the author/creator want to qualify your position? Why and how?
 - ▶ Does the author make a specific claim about your issue?
 - ▶ What assumptions or beliefs are either spoken or unspoken (implicit or explicit)?
5. On the basis of this imagined conversation, revise and refine the point that you would like to make about the issue so it can serve as your central thesis. Draft your opening paragraph in which you introduce this thesis relatively soon after a sentence or two that contextualizes the topic for the reader.
6. Compose your essay considering the elements of argumentation. Be sure to develop the case for your position by incorporating within your own thinking the conversations you had with the authors of the primary sources.

- ▶ You should feel free to say things like “Source A would disagree with my viewpoint, but here is why I still maintain my position” or “Source B would agree with the majority of my position but would offer a slightly different perspective in this area.”
- ▶ Don’t forget to cite your sources appropriately in the text itself.

Revising

7. Share your draft and solicit peer response for the following areas:

- ▶ Organizational structure: Is your argument structured to provide clarity to the reader?
- ▶ Elements of argumentation: Is each element effective (hook, claim, support, concessions/refutations, and call to action)?
- ▶ Style: Does your draft have sentence variety, coherence, and appropriate diction and tone for your audience?

Ask for specific suggestions for improvement in each of these areas to help you revise your draft.

Editing

- 8. Review your draft and correct errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling to produce a technically sound document.
- 9. Select an appropriate title and use available technology to create a final draft.

Presenting

- 10. Present your argument to your peers. Consider the various viewpoints and reflect on your own thinking about your claim. Has your view changed? Did other members of your group have similar views? Different? Record your reflections.

➤ **TECHNOLOGY TIP** Use a word processing program to help you create a professional looking product. You may want to incorporate side headings to help guide readers. Take advantage of the program’s spell-check feature to check your document.

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging
Ideas	<p>The essay effectively synthesizes the sources and the writer's position to defend, challenge, or qualify the central claim of the prompt. The cohesive, sustained argument includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thesis that contextualizes the issue and captures its complexity; • support that convincingly goes beyond the citation of a variety of source material to analyzing the sources' significance to the writer's position; • a conclusion that goes beyond a summary of the thesis by illuminating how the writer's position will continue to influence the reader. 	<p>The essay adequately synthesizes the sources and the writer's position to defend, challenge, or qualify the central claim of the prompt. The sound argument includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a straightforward thesis that briefly contextualizes the issue; • support that clearly connects and comments on the various source material to the writer's position; • a conclusion that is logical yet may be somewhat repetitive to the thesis. 	<p>The essay tries to synthesize the sources and the writer's position yet inadequately defends, challenges, or qualifies the central claim of the prompt. The attempted argument includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a weak thesis or one that is lost in a summary of sources; • support that paraphrases source material with no commentary or analysis to the writer's position; sources may be misunderstood; • a conclusion that returns directly to the attempted thesis or that is missing.
Organization	<p>The essay's effective organization aptly reinforces the ideas of the argument. Ideas move smoothly and comfortably with successful use of transitions enhancing the essay's coherence.</p>	<p>The essay's clear organization supports the ideas of the argument. Ideas are easy to follow. Transitions are used to move between ideas.</p>	<p>The essay's lack of organization detracts from the argument, making the ideas difficult to follow. It may jump too rapidly between ideas and lack transitions.</p>
Use of Language	<p>The essay demonstrates a mature style that advances the writer's ideas. Precise diction and skillful use of syntax, with keen attention to varied sentence openings, help to create a convincing voice. Standard writing conventions (including accurate citation of sources) are followed.</p>	<p>The essay demonstrates a style that adequately supports the writer's ideas. Logical diction and syntax, with some attention to varied sentence openings, help to create a suitable voice. Standard writing conventions (including accurate citation of sources) are followed; errors do not seriously impede readability.</p>	<p>The essay demonstrates a limited style that ineffectively supports the writer's ideas. Lapses in diction or syntax may not sustain a suitable voice throughout the essay. Sentence openings may be repetitive. Errors in standard writing conventions impede readability and sources may be inaccurately cited.</p>

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Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging
Reflection	The reflection perceptively analyzes how the writer has considered various viewpoints and thoroughly reveals the writer's thinking about his/her claim.	The reflection explains how the writer has considered various viewpoints and addresses the writer's thinking about his/her claim.	The reflection does little to analyze how the writer has considered various viewpoints or to show the writer's thinking about his/her claim.
Additional Criteria			

Comments: